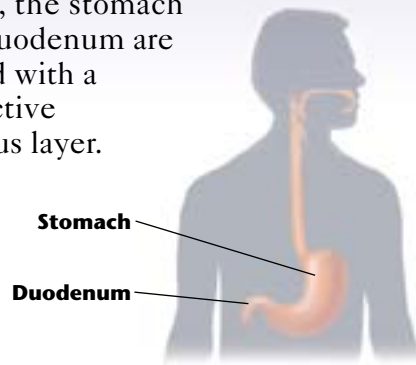


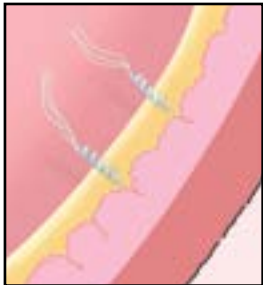
Where Ulcers Form

An ulcer (a sore or crater) can form in two main areas of the digestive tract. One is the duodenum, the space where the stomach meets the small intestine. The other is the stomach itself. These areas contain strong acids and enzymes. These help digest the food you eat. To keep these from also digesting your body's own tissue, the stomach and duodenum are coated with a protective mucous layer.



How *H. pylori* Cause Ulcers

H. pylori bacteria are common and can be passed from person to person. When *H. pylori* enter the body, they like to hide in the mucous layer coating your stomach and duodenum. The bacteria weaken this mucous layer and irritate the lining below it. Acid may then flow through the weakened mucous layer. This can burn the underlying irritated lining. These factors may lead to formation of an ulcer.



***H. pylori* invade** and disturb the protective mucous layer on the lining.



Acid may pass through the weakened mucous layer, causing an ulcer in the lining.

Making Treatment Successful

Take all your medicine exactly as your healthcare provider instructs. The medicine may cause you to feel worse for a short time, but it's needed to kill the bacteria. This treats the ulcer and helps prevent it from coming back. During treatment, do not smoke. Also avoid aspirin and NSAIDs such as ibuprofen and naproxen. These may keep the ulcer from healing. They also may make the ulcer more likely to return.



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Helicobacter Pylori

A Common Cause of Ulcers



A Painful Problem

An ulcer is a sore or crater in the lining of your digestive tract. If you have this problem, you know it can be uncomfortable and even painful. You may wonder what caused it. In the past, ulcers were thought to be caused by too much spicy food, stress, or even having an anxious personality. We now know that most ulcers are likely due to infection with bacteria known as *Helicobacter pylori*.



Common Ulcer Symptoms

Ulcers may not cause symptoms. If symptoms occur, they may come and go. They include:

- Burning, cramping, sharp, or hungerlike pain in the stomach area
- Pain that gets better or worse after eating
- Feeling full after a small amount of food
- Not feeling hungry
- Nausea or vomiting (vomit may be bloody or look like coffee grounds)
- Black, tarry, or bloody stools (meaning the ulcer is bleeding)

Your Evaluation

An evaluation can help the provider determine whether you have an ulcer. It can also help show whether *H. pylori* is present in your digestive tract.

History

Your provider may ask questions like these: What are your symptoms? How long have you had them? Have you had any bleeding? Do you smoke or take pain relievers? Does anyone else in your family have ulcers?



Possible Tests

- Tests of your stool, a special breath test, or a blood test may be done. These check for *H. pylori* in your digestive tract.
- An **endoscopic exam** may be done. This uses a long, lighted tube called an endoscope passed through your mouth into your stomach. The endoscope gives your provider a closer look at the ulcer. During the exam, a tiny sample of your stomach lining (biopsy) may be taken and tested for *H. pylori*.

Your Treatment

If tests show *H. pylori* bacteria in your digestive tract, medicines can help kill the bacteria so your ulcer can heal.



Medicines to Treat the Ulcer

To kill *H. pylori*, your provider will probably prescribe antibiotics. Other ulcer medicines are often prescribed as well. Most of the time, killing *H. pylori* will keep the ulcer from returning. In some cases, though, all of the bacteria are not killed or they come back. If this happens, another ulcer may form. It is important to take all of your medicines as prescribed until they are gone or you are told to stop. To be sure that the *H. pylori* is gone, you will likely have repeat testing after treatment is done. In some cases, a second round of treatment is needed.

When to Call Your Provider

With proper treatment, most ulcers heal without problems. But if you notice any of the following, call your provider right away:

- Vomiting frequently or vomiting blood
- Dark, tarry, or bloody stools
- Sudden, intense pain
- Continued weight loss
- Continued pain after taking your medicine